

BOOK REVIEW

Reiter Treponeme. A Review of the Literature.

By A. L. WALLACE and A. HARRIS. 1967. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 36, Suppl. 2, pp. 103. (17s. 6d.).

The Reiter treponeme has played an important part in the advances made in the serological diagnosis of syphilis during the last two decades. The relative ease with which large amounts of treponemes can be obtained from mass cultures has made it possible to study the antigenic composition of the Reiter organism and other strains of cultivable treponemes; these investigations will form a basis for future studies when it becomes possible to grow virulent *Treponema pallidum* itself *in vitro*.

A very large body of literature about the Reiter

treponeme has accumulated, much of it in European journals. In this monograph its history, morphology, growth requirements, and antigenic structure, and the use of intact treponemes and antigenic fractions are reviewed. Work on the antibodies detected by the Reiter treponeme and its fractions and their occurrence in the course of syphilitic infection are surveyed and suggestions are made for the incorporation of test procedures based on the Reiter treponeme into routine methods for the serological diagnosis of treponemal infection.

A bibliography of some 550 references is appended. These cover the world literature up to 1964 and, in compiling it, the authors of this excellent monograph have rendered a valuable service to all workers in this field. A.E.W.

OBITUARY

BESSIE MORRISON PLAYFAIR, 1896-1967

Bessie Morrison Playfair (*née* Davidson), born on December 13, 1896, graduated M.B., Ch.B., at St Andrews University in 1920 and proceeded M.D. 3 years later. In 1930 she obtained the D.P.H. After holding several appointments in Scotland, including that of Medical Officer to the Public Health Department in Dundee, she moved to London in 1934 and took up her principal appointment of second assistant in the department of venereal diseases at the Royal Free Hospital. In 1957 she was appointed in charge of this department. She retired in 1960. She died in the Dundee Royal Infirmary on November 21, 1967.

Dr Playfair had also worked as part-time medical officer in the Public Health Department in Deptford, and in the Women's Welfare Centres in North Kensington and Goswell Road. For nearly 20 years she was in charge of the Special Clinic at the Salvation Army Mothers Hospital, Clapton, and she also worked as a venereologist at the Avalon

Approved School for girls. For many years she lectured in her special subject to pupil midwives at the Royal College of Midwives. She was a member of the British Medical Association and Medical Society for the Study of Venereal Diseases for over 30 years.

She was an excellent venereologist and much loved by her patients; she was never at a loss when dealing with difficult situations demanding tact and understanding.

She was a charming Scot; much attached to her native land to which she went each summer for her holidays. Her sense of humour was delightful and came to the fore in everything she did. It gave her much pleasure when her only son decided to enter the medical profession, and she delighted in her two small grandsons. She was a true friend to those who knew her well. There will be many people who will mourn the passing of this gracious lady. J.S.